
Chairpersons Senator Moore and Representative Abercrombie, Vice-chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative McGee and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Barbara J. Cassin and I am Vice-President of the CT Association of the Deaf (CAD.) I am here to testify in support of Raised Bill 6765 An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications, with the amended changes recommended by the CRID Interpreting Law Task Force. These amended changes include some language corrections but more importantly includes the establishment of a Monitoring Board and a staff position to coordinate it.

In 1998 I was part of the group that initiated what is our current interpreting statute. At that time we had the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) and they were responsible for overseeing that interpreters working in CT were registered. Also if there was a concern or question about an interpreter's qualifications we could contact CDHI for their support and/or guidance. In my experience, the interpreters who are registered are skilled interpreters, but in my work and my experience with CAD some deaf people have complained about interpreters they have had who do not have necessary skills and are not registered. They also complain that some places continue to ignore the laws and will not provide interpreters. They want to know where they can go to complain. They want to know why no one is enforcing the law. Who can protect them from having to accept no interpreter or unskilled interpreters? Currently no one!

As hearing people you have ready and easy access to information – first hand. When you need to speak with a lawyer, see a doctor, talk with your senator and representative, you may need to make an appointment but you only have to deal with your schedule. As Deaf and Hard of Hearing people our access cannot be immediate. First we need to make the contact, then we usually need to explain that an interpreter needs to be provided (that it is the law!) and that it is inappropriate to expect us to bring our own

interpreter or use our family or friend. We may also need to explain where to get an interpreter. This all means that IF the party agrees to provide the interpreter there will be a time delay. We can accept this. However, because our information will always come second hand we must depend on that interpreter's skill. Who do we contact if the party refuses to follow the law and provide the interpreter? Who do we contact when the interpreter is not competent and possibly not registered?

If I were in a wheelchair I would not be expected to bring my own ramp. I know there are building codes that must be followed so that the ramp is the appropriate slope and is safe. There are fines and other penalties that can be imposed when a business or agency violates the codes. As a result it is now automatic that new construction and renovations follow these codes. We who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are asking for the same kind of access, the access that our federal and state laws mandate. Why must we continue to have to fight for this access? When we go to an emergency room why must we take time to educate the staff that we need an interpreter and our friend or family member IS NOT the answer? Why should we miss out on information **discussed** at staff meetings and settle instead for a brief outline or agenda? We need a Monitoring Board that has the power to oversee that the interpreters that are hired are following the law and have the appropriate skills. And if they don't or if a business or agency does not provide a qualified interpreter the Board needs to have the power to enforce the law.

I hope you will support this bill AS AMENDED to include the Monitoring Board and the necessary staff person.

Thank you.

Barbara J. Cassin

Vice President, Connecticut Association of the Deaf